

Joshua 17 - Thursday, June 14th, 2012

Joshua 17 (1) There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he *was* the firstborn of Joseph: *namely* for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war; therefore he was given Gilead and Bashan. **(2)** And there was *a lot* for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, the children of Helek, the children of Asriel, the children of Shechem, the children of Hepher, and the children of Shemida; these *were* the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.

- Whereas in chapter 16 it recorded the inheritance of Joseph's second born son Ephraim, we begin chapter 17 with his firstborn son Manasseh.
- It probably goes without saying, but we're going to have yet another chapter of seemingly mundane and monotonous details that seem boring.
- However, as I'm sure you well know, every word in God's Word has personal application for us now, even though it may have been for them then.

(3) But Zelophehad the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters. And these *are* the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. **(4)** And they came near before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the rulers, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers."

Therefore, according to the commandment of the LORD, he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. **(5)** Ten shares fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which *were* on the other side of the Jordan, **(6)** because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons; and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it deals with a very difficult matter as it relates to when one has no sons.
- Actually, Moses addressed this issue back in the twenty-seventh chapter of the book Numbers where we have this record of how this went down.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a brief moment as we revisit this particular passage. I think it's too rich to pass up the opportunity to do so.

Numbers 27:1-4 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 2 And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying: 3 "Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the LORD, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons. 4 Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers."

- As you might imagine, this would have presented quite a dilemma for Moses by the daughters of Zelophehad being entitled to their inheritance.
- It is interesting to note that in the pleading of their case before Moses, there's no hint whatsoever of complaining, or accusing God of being unfair.
- It's important to understand that this is how it is in the Middle-Eastern culture today in our modern day. Only the sons are to get the inheritance.
- Be that as it may, Zelophehad's daughters had a valid argument and as we see next, the case that they are bringing before Moses did have merit.

Numbers 27:5 So Moses brought their case before the LORD.

- This is yet another one of those places where we first, need to see what's "not" here in order to better understand what it is that we do see here.
- Notice that conspicuously absent from the narrative is Moses responding to them with what it is that they should do. He takes it right to the Lord.
- Here's what I'm thinking; this is one of those requests that needs to be taken to the Lord, whereas sometimes we already know what God's will is.
- In those cases, we may not even need to pray because God's Word is already clear on the matter. This issue with Moses however, is not so clear.

- There's something else here that can be easily missed at first glance, notice how that they are exercising faith believing they will enter the land.
- In other words, if they didn't really believe, by faith, that they would enter the Promised Land, they wouldn't have bothered to ask in the first place.
- Also, in exercising their faith, they go to the right place and stand before Moses, the priests and leaders at the door of the tabernacle as well.

- Now, on the other side of this I can't help but be blessed and impressed with how Moses responds or better said, doesn't respond to their request.
- Notice he doesn't answer them with what he would do if he were them. You would think that after 40 years, he would be the Bible answer man.
- Often times, we do err when we try to have all the answers instead of simply saying; "you know, I don't know, but I will ask the One Who does."
- As one commentator so aptly said it; "It is not what we know that counts, it is who we know that counts." Moses knows the One Who knows.

Numbers 27:6-7 6 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 7 "The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them."

- Now, it almost appears as if the Lord's response to Moses is an admission of their being right, and God being wrong. Obviously this isn't the case.
- I would suggest to you that the Lord wants us to learn how to seek Him. In other words, it's usually ambiguity and uncertainty propels us to Him.
- We will see this come into clearer focus in these last few verses, but suffice it to say, there does come a time when we need to seek the Lord.

Numbers 27:8-11 8 And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. 9 If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. 10 If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. 11 And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it.' And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

- Here we see God's response to them and it is most favorable, so much so that He will reward them for it, and it's because He is so pleased by it.
- One of the most astonishing truths in the Bible is that anytime we have even a mustard seed sized faith, God is pleased and will reward us for it.

Hebrews 11:6 KJV But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

- The answer they receive from the Lord is not only that the daughters can have the inheritance but, that they can keep it in their family as well.
- This is Who God is and how it's God is. He always gives us exceedingly abundantly above and beyond anything that we could think or imagine.
- Also, this is a good example of how God's judgments are always righteous, just and fair. Often times, God will give to us more than we will ask.

Revelation 15:3 KJV And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

Ephesians 3:20-21 NKJV Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (21) to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

(7) And the territory of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, that *lies* east of Shechem; and the border went along south to the inhabitants of En Tappuah. (8) Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh *belonged* to the children of Ephraim. (9) And the border descended to the Brook Kanah, southward to the brook. These cities of Ephraim *are* among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh *was* on the north side of the brook; and it ended at the sea. (10) Southward *it was* Ephraim's, northward *it was* Manasseh's, and the sea was its border. Manasseh's territory was adjoining Asher on the north and Issachar on the east. (11) And in Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth Shean and its towns, Ibleam and its towns, the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of En Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns—three hilly regions. (12) Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants* of those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. (13) And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out. (14) Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?"

- Apparently, the children of Manasseh think they got a raw deal when they are only given one lot. Notice they say; since we are a great people.
- It's almost as if they are saying; "don't you know who I am?" "I am too important and great to only be the recipient of this one lot, I deserve more."
- Suffice it to say, they are so full of pride that they are offended when they don't get what they think they should get. This is what pride smells like.

Jon Courson of this said; "People sometimes say, 'I should have more responsibility. I should have greater authority. I should have a bigger role to play in ministry, in my family, or on the job. I'm a great guy, I'm a great person. I've got great talent, great ability. I like Joshua's answer.'" (Which is recorded here in our next verse, verse 15.)

(15) So Joshua answered them, "If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you."

- You'll forgive my paraphrase here, but it's like Joshua is saying; "are you kidding me man!" "Who do you think you are thinking you got ripped off?"
- "So you think you're so great, then get off your duff and go clear a place for yourself in the land of the Perizzites and giants if your lot is too small.
- In other words, you're not going to get a free handout for doing nothing. If you want it, you have got to work hard to earn it. That's just the way it is!

One commentator shares a story that I think is most apropos in how it speaks to the lesson of our text. It goes like this; One Sunday, as he was away from his congregation, a well-known preacher visited a church in a different city. At the end of the service, he asked the pastor how long it took him to prepare his sermon. "Four hours," the young preacher answered, to which the older preacher responded, "That's funny. It took me twenty hours to prepare the same one." When the younger preacher realized to whom he was talking, he was mortified because he had not done what the older preacher had labored to do. He did not go to the forest country and chop down the timber, or drive out the Perizzites and Giants in order to hear the Lord's heart and receive His Word. Instead he found an easier way. "If you want to be great, the old preacher wisely said, "you will have to learn how to chop your own timber."

- I can't get over how diametrically opposed to Caleb the children of Manasseh were. Caleb was willing to do the hard thing and take on the giants.
- On the other side of the table you have the children of Manasseh refusing to do the hard thing and drive out the giants. They want it given to them.
- The lesson here's quite clear taking risks and hard work must be the norm in our lives as believers if we ever hope to posses the promises of God.

Proverbs 14:23 NIV All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

(16) But the children of Joseph said, "The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both those* who *are* of Beth Shean and its towns and *those* who *are* of the Valley of Jezreel." (17) And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—saying, "You *are* a great people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot, (18) but the mountain country shall be yours. Although *it is* wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots *and* are strong."

- Chapter 17 ends in a most unusual way such that we catch a glimpse of Joshua's heart, and in so doing, so too our greater than Joshua Jesus.
- One has suggested that in the previous verses Joshua spoke with the toughness of a father, yet now he speaks with the tenderness of a mother.
- I suppose you could say that it's the best of both worlds, as it were, and shows us, as an example to us what an outstanding leader will be like.